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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT CHARTER FLIGHTS, RECALL OF
PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage June 15 on the new arrangements for cross-strait charter flights; President Chen Shui-bian's remarks in response to the recall motion; investigations into President Chen's son-in-law's insider trading scandal and First Lady Wu Shu-chen's role in the Sogo Department Store gift certificates case. The pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged "Cross-Strait Charter Planes Will Fly on Four [Major] Holidays of the Year." The sub-headline added "Taiwan, Mainland China Announced Simultaneously Wednesday to Expand and Lift Ban on Four Types of Charter Flights: Special Cargo Charter, Holiday, Emergency Medical, and Special Humanitarian." The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" and pro-status quo "China Times," on the other hand, both ran similar front-page banner headlines that said "Prosecutor's Office Will Summon Wu Shu-chen for Gift Certificates Case." The "China Times" also carried results of its latest survey on page four, which showed that 43 percent of those polled said they support the motion to recall President Chen, and 47 percent said they believe that First Lady Wu Shu-chen was involved in the Sogo Department Store ownership battle. The same poll also showed that 46.9 percent of respondents believe the Presidential Office would interfere in the prosecutors' investigation of Chen's son-in-law's insider trading case, while 22 percent said it would not.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "United Daily News" analysis said the government chose to announce the new arrangements for cross-strait charter flights amid the moves to recall President Chen because it wants to prove to the pan-Blue camp that Chen remains the state leader who holds substantive powers in his hand. A "China Times" analysis criticized Chen's remarks in response to the recall motion, saying Chen is seeking to sow discord in Taiwan society. End summary.

¶3. New Cross-Strait Flights

"Charter Flights Are Meant to Serve as Bian and Su's Track Record"

Journalist Sean Liu said in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (6/15):

"... The fact that [the government] sought to announce concrete developments made in cross-strait negotiations will allow A-bian, who has determined to counterattack the pan-Blue camp, to prove that he remains the state leader who holds substantive powers. Bian's move to act as usual to push for policies that are favorable for the nation is conducive for him to portray the pan-Blue camp as 'wanting nothing but to recall Chen and regain power.' Beijing's pragmatic attitude in handling and agreeing to announce it, despite the fact that Beijing knows that Bian is now in the midst of a recall upheaval, also provided an opportunity for the Presidential Office

to exert its power.

"Having presented the 'beef' of cross-Strait policies, Chen is scheduled for a site visit to the Kinmen frontline today. He wants to prove to the pan-Blue camp that he not only has no fear of the recall motion, but remains the head of his administration."

4. Recall of President Chen Shui-bian

"Presidential Office Seeking to Sow Discord Using Anti-Recall [Moves]?"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling commented in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (6/15):

"... The fact that President Chen defined the recall motion as a political confrontation has highlighted that all his apologies and admissions of faults were all superficial moves. Such an observation is evident from the Presidential Office's interactions with local people. Starting from the day when the Taiwan Development Corporation's insider trading case and the controversial Sogo ownership case were unveiled, the Presidential Office has never agreed to hold a press conference to clarify the myths and answer people's questions. But the Presidential Office invited the foreign press to a tea party just after the Legislative Yuan launched the recall motion, and during the party it asked the foreign journalists not to believe the news stories reported by local media....

"Frankly speaking, Chen himself should be held most responsible for the escalating calls demanding him to step down. ... Many Green supporters are currently stuck in a dilemma. They saw everything and heard everything, so they are not very willing to defend Chen and they don't know how to defend him. The many remarks made by the President sounded like hypnotism to his supporters. But his statements which relentlessly divide the Taiwan people from mainlanders and split those living in northern Taiwan from those in southern Taiwan have sown serious discord in Taiwan society. ..."

KEEGAN